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New York

President:	Mr. Churkin/Mr. Pankin	(Russian Federation)
Members:	Argentina	Mr. Rutilo
	Australia	Mr. Bliss
	Azerbaijan	Mr. Huseynli
	China	Mr. Zhang Changwei
	France	Mr. Pecassou
	Guatemala	Ms. Bolaños Pérez
	Luxembourg	Mr. Flies
	Morocco	Mr. Benmoussa
	Pakistan	Mr. Tarar
	Republic of Korea	Mr. Shin Dong Ik
	Rwanda	Mr. Kayinamura
	Togo	Mr. Bocco
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Meek
	United States of America	Mr. Cenzer

Agenda

The situation in Afghanistan

Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security (S/2013/133)

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The meeting resumed at 3.05 p.m.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I now give the floor to the representative of Spain.

Mr. Arias (Spain) (*spoke in Spanish*): This year, we commemorate the twelfth anniversary of the international community's commitment to Afghanistan. I believe that this is an excellent moment to thank the Secretary-General for introducing his report (S/2013/133) to the Council today, and to say that I greatly value the contribution made to this debate by Ambassador Tanin.

Spain, which has been part of this process from the beginning, has been making a military and civilian contribution to the stabilization and reconstruction of the country. The human toll of Spain's military effort in Afghanistan has been high; 100 Spaniards have died since the arrival of our troops. Spain is currently the eighth largest contributor to the NATO International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan, under the Security Council's mandate. We are now engaged in the withdrawal of the 1,300 Spanish soldiers who are still in Afghanistan, distributed throughout the provinces of Herat, whose airport is managed by Spain; Badghis, which is one of the most inaccessible and disadvantaged provinces of the country and where the Spanish provincial reconstruction team is located in Qala-i-Naw; and Kabul. Spain has supported in the past and continues today to strongly support the efforts of the Afghan Government in the complex transition process, both in their security and civilian aspects. We are currently entering a difficult stage in the process. We are in the final stretch, as we all know. We all have to do our utmost to ensure that the transition is irreversible and sustainable. We must therefore redouble our efforts in the coming months, particularly in the areas of governance, institution-building and economic development.

The transfer of responsibilities in the security sector to Afghan authorities has already been completed in the six districts of Badghis province. We are satisfied with the way in which the transition is progressing. Spain will continue cooperating and will remain firmly committed to the activities of consulting, training and supporting the Afghan security forces during the completion of the transition process.

With regard to the civil aspects of the transition, we are now in a position to complete the transfer of the cooperation projects that we have developed in our area of responsibility. We are considering doing that in parallel with the transfer of responsibility in the crucial area of security. Currently, most of the projects are already being managed by Afghan personnel. The transfer will be formalized with the signing of the appropriate agreements with the representatives of the Afghan ministries that will take over those projects.

In 2013, Cooperación Española en Afganistán will conclude after seven years of positive collaboration. It should be emphasized, however, that Cooperación Española will continue to participate in multilateral projects through its contributions to international organizations.

Despite the difficulties inherent in the complex peace process, recent progress permits us to hope for a possible relaunch of dialogue towards sustainable and inclusive reconciliation. For that to be successful, it should involve the armed groups and all sectors of Afghan society in a context of respect for the Afghan Constitution, especially when it comes to human rights, in particular those of women and girls.

The year 2012 was a year of major international events related to Afghanistan. Now it is time to note the year's many achievements.

Afghanistan will continue to need international assistance after 2014. That is why the bases for the new allied mission for the post-2014 period are being outlined, focusing exclusively on educational and training tasks. In that way it will seek to assist the Afghan National Security Forces in the best possible way so that they can successfully deal with the important work that they have to do and that is expected of them.

On the regional level, we welcome the fact that the Istanbul Process, whose principal goal is to promote regional cooperation and security in order to achieve peace and stability in Afghanistan, is decisively moving forward. Spain is currently examining its contributions to the confidence-building measures that are associated with the Process.

In addition to everything I have just set out, we are also working to secure the political and financial sustainability essential for the consolidation of the Afghan political system. We trust that the Government of Afghanistan will continue to fulfil its basic commitments in the fields of governance, development, the rule of law, human rights and the fight against corruption.

In that context, the presidential elections announced for 5 April 2014 will be a significant challenge from a logistical perspective. The international community will continue to support Afghanistan, which in turn will have to ensure an inclusive, transparent and democratic election, with results that the Afghan people can fully identify with.

The work and the support of the United Nations will be of great importance in those elections. That is why Spain supports the decision to extend the mandate of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan by one year, and greatly appreciates the central and impartial role that the United Nations is playing in promoting peace and stability in Afghanistan.

Finally, allow me also to emphasize the enormous importance that Spain attaches to the role that the European Union can play in assisting the Afghan authorities on issues related to capacity-building, including governance, transparency and the rule of law, as well as in the training of civil servants and members of the police and judicial sectors, and in the socioeconomic development of the country in general.

In the light of what I have said here, Spain firmly supports the ongoing negotiations for an ambitious cooperation agreement for partnership and development between the European Union and Afghanistan, which will certainly set the tone for and guide the relations between both partners in the coming years. The coming months will be decisive for the consolidation of the international community's legacy in Afghanistan. It is essential that the progress and successes of the past decade not be reversed.

The Special Representative of the European Union for Afghanistan has already made a statement, which we of course share. Nevertheless, I am also grateful, Mr. President, for the fact that you have given me the opportunity to make an additional set of comments in my national capacity.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I now give the floor to the representative of Germany.

Mr. Wittig (Germany): Let me, at the outset, extend my thanks to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Ján Kubiš, for his great leadership at the helm of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) and for all his efforts in support of the Afghan people, and to his team.

Germany will continue to support Afghanistan in close partnership throughout the transformation decade. At the Bonn and Tokyo Conferences, Afghanistan and the international community set the framework for cooperation and reaffirmed their mutual commitments. We are therefore pleased to see that the Tokyo Mutual Accountability Framework has gained considerable momentum, and we commit ourselves to further work towards implementing it. Today, I would like to focus on two issues that are key in that regard.

The first issue is elections. We welcome the progress achieved by the Government of Afghanistan in preparing for the presidential elections to be held in April 2014. Yet challenges remain. We look forward to the swift adoption of a legal framework for the elections, as well as to the timely appointment of a new chairman and commissioners for the Independent Election Commission. We emphasize the need to establish a credible complaints mechanism and to put in place effective measures to prevent widespread electoral fraud. Finally, and most important, we encourage all Afghan stakeholders to engage in a constructive dialogue on these issues so as to find the broadest possible consensus.

UNAMA can assume a beneficial role in supporting the Afghan-led and -owned process. We therefore welcome the decision taken by the Afghan authorities to request UNAMA's support for the 2014-2015 elections and the subsequent United Nations electoral needs assessment mission that was undertaken in December and January. Germany stands ready to further support that process alongside UNAMA and its international partners. Our shared objective is to hold inclusive, transparent and credible elections in Afghanistan that will contribute to the sustainable development of the country's political system and be firmly founded in the Afghan Constitution.

Secondly, a stable security environment is of paramount importance in achieving Afghanistan's goal of further developing into a democratic and economically thriving country. We therefore welcome recent developments in the Afghan-led reconciliation process. That includes efforts by Afghanistan and the international community to establish conditions conducive to substantive dialogue, such as preparations for the opening of a Taliban office in Doha. In that regard, we also appreciate the contribution of regional actors. Their support is critical to fostering the peace

and reconciliation process. We encourage all sides to strengthen their efforts.

I would like to conclude by underlining that the United Nations will continue to play a crucial role, both in the year to come and during the transformation decade. We therefore welcome the Council's adoption of resolution 2096 (2013), which renews UNAMA's mandate for another 12 months. Germany will continue to support UNAMA in fulfilling its mandate, particularly in its support for the Afghan Government and in preparing for the presidential elections, in protecting and promoting human rights, particularly women's rights, and in ensuring effective coordination among donors and the Government of Afghanistan. In order for UNAMA to live up to those expectations, we strongly support providing adequate resources for the Mission and its appropriate presence throughout the country.

Finally, we look forward to engaging in constructive dialogue during the next month on UNAMA's role after 2014.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I now give the floor to the representative of Slovakia.

Mr. Ružička (Slovakia): Let me begin by greeting all nations and peoples here, including many from Afghanistan, with best wishes for the new year. The Nowruz holiday is always an awakening and a new start, and a moment that brings us into harmony with nature. It is about forgetting the harshness of winter and appreciating the warmth of the sun. And we are very hopeful that its warmth will sprinkle some positive energy on our deliberations today.

I would like to align myself with the statement delivered by Special Representative Ušackas on behalf of the European Union (EU). While we fully support the shared EU priorities in Afghanistan, let me emphasize some points that we see as important.

I would like to thank the Secretary-General for his comprehensive report (S/2013/133). His briefing and the report presented a comprehensive picture of Afghanistan today. We are pleased with the steady progress in the transfer of security responsibility and the growing size of the Afghan National Police and the Afghan National Army. In many areas where Afghan forces have taken the lead, the security transition has been going in the right direction. We welcome the efforts of the Ministry of the Interior aimed at transforming the police from a security force to a service focused on law enforcement and protection. The role of local police is vital, especially in remote parts of the country. But the process of building functional and credible Afghan national security forces must go on. In our view, the main challenge is insider attacks, which negatively affect the overall situation in multiple ways. The Afghan National Security Forces have almost reached the anticipated numbers. Therefore, the focus should now shift to quality, loyalty and professionalism.

While the security sector is on track, it is equally important to focus efforts on the political and economic elements of the transition and to synchronize them with the current plan to hand over full security responsibility to Kabul in 2014. Further progress in reconciliation is crucial to future success. The willingness of some elements of the Taliban to leave the insurgency, join in the dialogue and enter the political process can set a positive example and deserves our support. The peace and reconciliation process must have strong Afghan ownership.

We see the political transition as a possible game changer in Afghanistan's internal dynamics. We believe that Afghans will take all necessary steps towards achieving inclusive, free, fair and transparent elections. Only a legitimate Government will be strong enough to make progress in the areas of security, good governance and development. The United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) can play an important role in advising on how to proceed efficiently with electoral reforms and broader political outreach to Afghan society. Some fear that, after the international forces have departed, Afghanistan may slip back into insurgency, return to civil war or once again become a hub for terrorism. We should unite our efforts to ensure that we stand firmly side by side with Afghanistan and the Afghan people on that issue. The Bonn and Tokyo Conferences, the NATO, Chicago and Lisbon Summits and other international forums have ensured a strong commitment on the part of the international community that the Afghans will not be abandoned.

We must keep in mind the seriousness of the threat posed by opium production in Afghanistan to the stability of the region and the overall security situation. We welcome the Afghan Government's commitment to combating that problem. However, it cannot succeed alone without regional cooperation and international engagement. We therefore support the initiatives led by

the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, which are aimed not only at eradicating poppy production but also at dealing with related aspects, such as development and law enforcement. It is crucial that neighbouring countries cooperate and play an active role in that area. In border control, for example, such cooperation is an important factor in eliminating illegal trans-boundary activities, including drug and weapons trafficking, as well as terrorism.

Afghanistan today remains a proud Muslim society with more women now serving in the Afghan National Assembly than in many democracies. Access to education is getting closer to being universal. Under the Taliban, fewer than 1 million children, almost all of them boys, were in school. Now more than 8 million children go to school, and more than a third of them are girls.

In 2001, Afghanistan's gross domestic product was around $2 billion. In one decade, that number has reached $20 billion, until now largely thanks to foreign aid. But Afghanistan has the potential to build on that investment. Among the most visible results is the dramatic increase in the use of new technologies and the growth of small and medium-sized businesses.

Under the Taliban, only one tenth of the population had access to basic health care. Now that better health care is generally available, life expectancy has increased from 45 to 62 years for men and to 64 years for women. Improved education, health care and an atmosphere that is encouraging to small and medium-sized business are the cornerstones of sustainable and irreversible development after the military presence has been reduced.

In conclusion, UNAMA is a crucial and irreplaceable actor in Afghanistan, and its role should be extended. In that regard, we appreciate the words of support voiced for Mr. Ján Kubiš for his professional leadership of that challenging Mission. We know that the United Nations and UNAMA will be important players in Afghanistan, particularly after 2014. As time is passing very quickly and there are many challenges, we should start to think and discuss how to adjust UNAMA's post-2014 mandate, which will have to be provided with the proper resources. The United Nations should act and deliver as one. Slovakia will support Afghanistan until 2014 and beyond. While any military support after 2014 will depend on the requirements of the new NATO-led mission after the departure of the International Security Assistance Force, we have made a decision to provide financial support for sustaining the Afghan national security forces at a level of $1.5 million from 2015 to 2017. Afghanistan remains the top priority of our official development aid.

One of most famous Nowruz traditions among Afghans is to forget and forgive one another's mistakes and to start the new year with new hope and new goals. Only those who do nothing do not make mistakes. Victory gives us joy; defeat gives us experience and strength. They are wise who act and learn how to achieve the new hope that all people in Afghanistan deserve.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I now give the floor to the representative of Estonia.

Mr. Kolga (Estonia): I would first like to thank you, Mr. President, for convening this important meeting. By the same token, I would like to thank the Secretary-General for his briefing and the presentation of his report (S/2013/133). I would also like to thank Special Representative Ján Kubiš for the hard work that he and his Mission have delivered on the ground in Afghanistan. I would also like to thank Ambassador Tanin for his comprehensive remarks today. My delegation also aligns itself with the statement delivered on behalf of the European Union.

Afghanistan has made great progress in recent years, and it is important that that momentum not be lost as it goes through one of the most pivotal periods in the country's history. It is vital that the international community remain strongly engaged in endorsing Afghanistan's efforts during the transition phase, as well as after 2014. I can assure the Council that Estonia will stay committed to supporting Afghanistan after the completion of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) mission.

Estonia has been a long-term partner of Afghanistan. There is no other country in the world where our engagement is as strong as in Afghanistan. Estonia is one of the highest per capita contributors to the ISAF mission. Our troops are in Helmand province together with British troops. The contingent is expected to be withdrawn in mid-2014. By keeping our company in Afghanistan until the end of the election period, we aim to make a contribution to safeguarding the future of Afghanistan. We are also looking at financially supporting the post-2014 mission and the sustainability of the Afghan National Security Forces. Estonia is also

contributing to the European Union Police Mission and the NATO training mission.

We do not believe that there can be a sustainable solution in Afghanistan that involves only a military contribution. In order to target the causes of the problems that Afghanistan is facing, we must continue our efforts with development cooperation after 2014.

Estonia's development assistance is focused on four sectors, namely, security, education, health care and the rule of law. In addition to supporting the central Government through our annual contributions to the Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund, we are carrying out bilateral projects to help Afghanistan with our knowledge and experience. For instance, Kabul University is currently establishing a master's programme in information technology with the support of Tallinn University, and we continue to invite Afghan civil servants to training courses in Tallinn.

I would also like to draw attention to the human rights situation. There have been gains in the protection of human rights in Afghanistan, although action is needed to improve the situation.

In our development projects, Estonia pays extra attention to promoting women's rights and the well-being of children, as they are the most vulnerable groups. We believe that traditions or beliefs should never be used as a pretext for gender inequality and non-recognition of women's rights. At the recent session of the Commission on the Status of Women, the Estonian Foreign Minister, Mr. Urmas Paet, strongly condemned all kinds of violence against women and girls. We hope that the adoption of the agreed conclusions of the Commission will give further impetus to combating violence against women and girls in Afghanistan. Estonia calls for the effective and swift implementation of the action plan for the prevention of underage recruitment and its annexes on killing and maiming and sexual violence against children.

There are still many challenges ahead on Afghanistan's path to becoming a stable, secure, democratic and prosperous country, namely, the transition of security and civilian responsibility, the reconciliation process, the elections next year and last but not least, the economic transition.

We are pleased to note that the transition of security to Afghan forces is on track and that the Afghan Government has announced that the Afghan forces are set to take over responsibility for the security of nearly 90 per cent of the country's population.

The implementation of the Tokyo Mutual Accountability Framework is fundamental for long-term stability and future successes in Afghanistan, and we recognize the significant progress made in the process.

Free, transparent and fair elections in 2014 and 2015 are paramount in improving the legitimacy of the political transition and in consolidating democracy in Afghanistan. We underline the urgency of adopting a legal and institutional framework with an adequate system of checks and balances for the proper conduct of elections. With the help of coalition forces, a secure environment for the elections should be provided. We emphasize the importance of establishing an effective electoral administration and fraud-prevention mechanisms. The United Nations role remains essential in preparations for the elections through technical and financial assistance.

The reconciliation process in the country should of course be Afghan-led and Afghan-owned. However, in our view, the strong support from the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) to the High Peace Council in building confidence and trust has been indispensable.

With regard to Afghan economic development and transition, we encourage the Government to implement necessary reforms, give all the necessary support to the private sector, ensure a secure and stable business environment and improve measures for fighting corruption. Investing in people's education and skills is also important to further economic growth.

Strengthening regional cooperation with neighbouring South and Central Asian countries is key for achieving a durable security environment in Afghanistan. In addition, close regional cooperation creates opportunities for economic development. Therefore, Estonia supports the Istanbul Process and the implementation of confidence-building measures.

The United Nations and UNAMA have been taking an important lead in civil-military coordination, international development aid cooperation, the protection of human rights, the monitoring of the humanitarian situation, counter-narcotics efforts, and, as mentioned, in facilitating the reconciliation process and assistance for elections. For that reason, it is hard

to underestimate the role that the United Nations and its bodies have played in Afghanistan. After the departure of the foreign military forces, that role is only likely to increase.

As the United Nations commitment and assistance are substantial in the transition period in Afghanistan, we fully support the extension of UNAMA's mandate for another year.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I now give the floor to the representative of Turkey.

Mr. Eler (Turkey): I would like to begin my statement by thanking the Secretary-General for his comprehensive briefing this morning.

We welcome recent positive signals coming from Afghanistan. As the transition approaches completion, we see promising signs that Afghans are ready to assume responsibility for their future.

We are moving towards the fifth tranche of transition, with 87 per cent of the Afghan population already under Afghan-led security. The decline in security-related incidents is a positive signal. The capabilities of Afghan security forces are developing. Boosting their capacities and competence further, under the rule of law framework, remains a key priority.

The preparations for the 2014 elections are well under way. We support all efforts towards achieving a democratic and inclusive political process through independent, free and fair elections, with the participation of political parties and civil society. In that regard, we commend the efforts of the Independent Election Commission, the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) and the United Nations Development Programme.

Transition and reconciliation processes are mutually reinforcing. The successful continuation of Afghan-led peace and reconciliation efforts will constitute another important step towards security, stability and political transition. We welcome progress in that area under the successful guidance of Mr. Rabbani, head of the High Peace Council, as well as the political facilitation efforts of UNAMA. The concrete support by the Government of Pakistan for Afghan peace and reconciliation efforts is noteworthy. Turkey will continue to support the process, keeping the best interests of the Afghan people in mind.

Despite those positive signs, major political, economic and security challenges remain. The security situation continues to be a matter of grave concern, leading to unacceptable human costs. Natural disasters, chronic poverty and development challenges pose grave threats. The most vulnerable segments of society, especially children, women and girls, are under heightened risk. The potential humanitarian and economic consequences of transition are worrisome.

As Afghanistan moves forward towards political and security transitions, we must remain in touch with those realities on the ground. We commend the constructive steps taken by the Afghan people and Government to overcome those problems. The continued display of will from the international community will strengthen the hopes of the Afghan people for the future and help to ensure that a smooth transition is under way.

In that regard, we are glad to see increased efforts to move to substantive issues in the Tokyo Mutual Accountability Framework, both from the Afghan Government and the international community, to ensure the concrete implementation of mutual commitments. We commend the endorsement of the new national priority programmes and the aid management policy.

As the international presence is being reduced, regional cooperation is gaining momentum. The Istanbul Process has surpassed all expectations with its speedy progress. The spirit of regional ownership, the engagement and technical support of the United Nations and its agencies and the interest and support of the international community have made that possible. We were pleased to see the endorsement, at the meeting of senior officials held in Baku on 6 February, of the implementation plans for the six confidence-building measures. The next meeting of senior officials, which is to be held on 25 March in Kabul, will smooth out the final details of the implementation plans, which have been endorsed in principle. The momentum will be strengthened even further at the next ministerial meeting to be held in Almaty on 26 April — the only meeting on Afghanistan thus far scheduled at the Foreign Ministers' level for 2013.

Trilateral and quadrilateral initiatives are important tools for fostering regional ownership in the Heart of Asia process. In that spirit, the trilateral summit process among Afghanistan, Pakistan and Turkey has contributed to regional dialogue and cooperation through the seven meetings held since

2007. The most recent trilateral meeting, convened in Ankara last December under the theme "Connectivity", focused on political dialogue, military and security issues, peace and reconciliation efforts, and economic development and partnership. Further connectivity will facilitate economic development, stability and self-sustainability. We attach particular importance to the completion and maintenance of local railroad and land routes, the development of regional economic projects and the enhancement of civil aviation capabilities.

We welcome all projects and cooperation efforts to foster further regional connectivity and economic growth. The constructive engagement of Afghanistan's regional partners will remain key to addressing common challenges, such as terrorism, barriers to trade and investment, drug-trafficking and refugees.

As Afghanistan's regional and international partners, we should spare no effort to contribute to the vision of a secure, peaceful and self-sufficient Afghanistan. That is in all of our mutual interests. Turkey will always remain in solidarity with the Afghan people and will continue to contribute to a safe, secure and prosperous Afghanistan, as we have done for many decades.

In conclusion, I would like to voice our strong belief that the United Nations will continue to play its crucial role after the transition. I would like to take this opportunity to especialy commend the valuable efforts of the United Nations, and of UNAMA in particular, in taking the Istanbul Process further, as well as to express our heartfelt gratitude to Special Representative Ján Kubiš and his hard-working team.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I now give the floor to the representative of India.

Mr. Manjeev Singh Puri (India): I join others in thanking you, Sir, for scheduling today's debate on the situation in Afghanistan in the context of the renewal of the mandate of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA). I would also like to congratulate you on your assumptio of the presidency of the Security Council for this month. I also thank the Secretary-General for his briefing, as well as Ambassador Zahir Tanin, Permanent Representative of Afghanistan, for his statement.

Looking ahead at the timelines for the withdrawal of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) and the elections in Afghanistan, it is important that the commitments flowing from the major international conferences in Bonn, Chicago and Tokyo, and at the regional level in Istanbul and Kabul, for peace, security and development in Afghanistan be implemented in word and deed. They are also essential for creating an enabling environment for Afghanistan's fiscal sustainability and self-reliance.

It is particularly worrying that the overall security situation remains volatile in the country amidst the ongoing simultaneous security, political and economic transitions. Even after over a decade of ISAF's presence and the concerted efforts of the international community, Afghanistan continues to face an existential threat from terrorism. We have yet to isolate and root out the syndicate of terrorism, which includes elements of Al-Qaida, the Taliban, Lashkar e Toiba and other terrorist and extremist groups that operate with impunity from safe havens across Afghanistan's borders. As NATO draws down from Afghanistan, claiming "mission nearly accomplished", there is no sign, judging by the latest acts of terrorism and violence, of a similar drawdown on the part of the terrorist outfits across the border. Whatever happens in Afghanistan, it has affected and will continue to affect security in our region and the world. We have not forgotten the terrorist havens that wreaked havoc as Afghanistan descended into chaos in the 1990s. Obviously, we do not want that to happen again.

The Secretary-General's report (S/2013/133) rightly notes that Afghanistan will be able to achieve the stability, growth and prosperity that its people aspire to and deserve only if there is peace. As Afghanistan looks forward to holding presidential and provincial elections in April 2014, we need to bear in mind that short-sighted approaches and quick-fixes guided by political expediency could be a recipe for unmitigated disaster. It is therefore imperative that any political settlement be driven by Afghans in order to be accepted by all sections of Afghan society without jeopardizing the hard-won gains of the past 10 years.

A steady focus on the elections and constitutionalism would vindicate the 2004 Constitution — which has been most widely debated, yet enjoys the maximum consensus to date — consolidate democracy, institutionalize the elections and provide the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan with the legitimacy and political and moral strength to negotiate with the Taliban, the advocates of an Islamic emirate and the international community from a position of strength

and guarantee the post-2001 gains for younger and older generations of Afghans. For that reason, internationally accepted red lines must be respected in any reconciliation model to be considered. So, too, actions in support of the political transition should not undermine Afghan institutions of governance. We will need a credible Government after 2014 as well.

Most of all, we have yet to see any evidence to support the notion of a dividing line separating Al-Qaida from other terrorist and extremist groups, nor is it clear, indeed, that those groups and those who support them have either had an epiphany or made a strategic reassessment of their objectives. To us, it makes little sense to draw lines of distinction that most of those groups and their sponsors are not prepared to accept themselves, either in word or deed.

India remains engaged with like-minded countries in sharing the goal of peace, security and development in Afghanistan. In pursuit of that, India has held dialogues with the United States and Afghanistan in New Delhi, and with China and Russia in Moscow in February.

We firmly belief that Afghan ownership and leadership is critical for cementing the foundations of lasting peace and stability in the country. The Afghan people should be able to choose their destiny in an environment free from coercion and outside interference. Security is the key ingredient for accelerated socioeconomic development, which could also be a catalyst for strengthening the voices of moderation and tolerance in Afghan society. India has taken a number of initiatives in that regard.

The Delhi Investment Summit on Afghanistan, held in June 2012, was an important endeavour in focusing regional and international attention on investing in Afghanistan and on the potential to promote economic development and stability in Afghanistan during the transition period.

India has also launched initiatives to promote bilateral trade and investment in Afghanistan, including measures such as the elimination of baseline customs duties on virtually all imports from Afghanistan and investment in the Hajigak iron ore reserves.

Enhanced regional cooperation and regional integration are imperative for bringing in much needed foreign investments to Afghanistan, ensuring its economic viability and spurring economic growth. Conscious of that imperative need, India has taken the lead in the commercial confidence-building measures under the Istanbul Process. Within South Asia, the South Asian Regional Cooperation programme remains an important vehicle for strengthening regional cooperation.

Afghanistan is strategically located as a land bridge linking South Asia with Central Asia and the Middle East, and is an important conduit for tapping into the vast energy resources of Central Asia. Projects such as the TAPI gas pipeline would benefit all of us and have the potential to usher in a rapid transformation of our region.

Afghanistan and India are natural strategic partners by virtue of geography and a common vision of peace and cooperation in the region. India remains committed to supporting Afghanistan during the crucial period of transition until the end of 2014 and thereafter. The implementation of the strategic partnership agreement of October 2011 between our two countries has already been set in motion, with the convening of the first meeting of the Partnership Council last year.

India is assisting as best as it can in Afghanistan's reconstruction and development. India has pledged up to $2 billion in development and humanitarian assistance. The projects under consideration are in line with the projects suggested under the national priority programmes of the Government of Afghanistan. The pace and nature of the utilization of the present and future Indian assistance is being determined by the preference, comfort level and absorptive capacity of the Afghan Government.

Afghanistan needs assistance and support to build its capacity to help it overcome the toll that three decades of externally inflicted conflict have imposed on it. India has been assisting Afghanistan in rebuilding the foundations of its society through scholarships for its young and training programmes that seek to help its democratic institutions brace for the multiplicity of challenges that it faces.

India remains unwavering in its commitment to assisting the people of Afghanistan in their endeavour to build a peaceful, stable, democratic and prosperous nation. As we approach critical timelines for transition in the near future, the international community must continue to work with renewed vigour and unity of purpose towards strengthening the efforts of the Afghan

Government in seeking solutions that are inclusive and led by the Afghan people themselves.

We believe that the United Nations has a central role to play in the coordination of international assistance. There is no substitute for the coordinating role of the United Nations in the reconstruction of Afghanistan. We appreciate the leadership of Special Representative of the Secretary-General Ján Kubiš and the good work done by UNAMA; it must continue to work in close consultation with the Afghan Government.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I now give the floor to the representative of Lithuania.

Ms. Murmokaitė (Lithuania): Allow me at the start to thank you, Mr. President, for having convened this important debate.

Lithuania aligns itself with the statement delivered by Mr. Vygaudas Ušackas, European Union Special Representative for Afghanistan. In addition, allow me to make the following points.

My first point is on the electoral processes. We welcome the active engagement of the political parties and civil society in election-related developments. It is essential that those elections be inclusive, transparent, free and fair. Critical preparations for the elections must be accelerated, including tangible progress in voter identification and registration.

The adoption of a robust electoral framework with credible mechanisms for electoral fraud prevention and dispute resolution is required. The formation of electoral management bodies must be duly completed and qualified officials appointed to the Independent Election Commission. International observation of the elections should be guaranteed.

We encourage the Electoral Assistance Division of the Department of Political Affairs, the United Nations Development Programme and the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) to continue to provide all necessary assistance in preparing for the Afghan-led elections.

I would like to recall that in the past the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) deployed elections support teams to Afghanistan, one of the OSCE's Asian Partners for Cooperation. A solid set of recommendations on improving the electoral framework was presented by the OSCE in Kabul in 2012. We encourage Afghan officials to make use of the experience and recommendations offered by the OSCE.

My second point is on the situation of women and girls. We appreciate the commitment of the Afghan Government to empowering women and ensuring gender equality. Post-Taliban Afghanistan has seen the appointment of the first female district governor, Saira Shakeeb Sadat. Women are asserting themselves as ministers and members of Parliament and of the High Peace Council. We welcome these developments and reiterate that women's full participation in the reconciliation and transformation processes is essential for the construction of a peaceful, stable and prosperous Afghanistan.

Much more needs to be done, however. Every two hours, a woman dies from pregnancy-related causes. Domestic violence against women and the imprisonment of women for alleged moral crimes are a cause of concern, as is the number of women and girls killed or injured during the past year, which increased considerably.

We urge the United Nations to continue its support for systematic monitoring and reporting on the gender commitments contained in the Tokyo Declaration and Mutual Accountability Framework.

Thirdly, my delegation remains concerned about the level of casualties among civilians and the increased targeting of civilian locations by anti-Government forces and illegal armed groups. In particular, the continuing deaths and injuries of children is a cause of concern. We hope that the action plan for the prevention of underage recruitment and its annexes on killing and maiming as well as sexual violence against children will be fully implemented and that all necessary measures will be taken to prevent violations of the rights of the child.

Over 1 million Afghans live within 500 metres of mine-contaminated areas. As a Mine Action Programme for Afghanistan donor, Lithuania has itself engaged in demining and supports the Afghan mine-clearing efforts. We welcome the progress achieved and encourage the Afghan Government to work on mine-action legislation with all relevant stakeholders and to clear all anti-personnel landmines by 2013 as part of its obligations under the Ottawa Convention.

Finally, turning to regional cooperation, the success of Afghanistan's transition process requires the active involvement of all regional stakeholders. For the United Nations and regional organizations to achieve greater synergies, it is important to better coordinate their efforts in Afghanistan and the region, including with countries of Central Asia.

We are heartened by the determination of the States in the region, through the Istanbul Process, the bilateral Afghan-Pakistan dialogue and other initiatives, to address the manifold challenges facing the Afghan nation. The opening of an office in Doha for the purpose of negotiations could be a step forward towards a peaceful, Afghan-led solution to the Taliban insurgency. Reconciliation has to be an inclusive and Afghan-owned process. We welcome the Security Council's readiness to adjust the Taliban sanctions regime in support of those efforts.

To conclude, we welcome the adoption by the Council of resolution 2096 (2013), which extends the mandate of UNAMA for 12 months. UNAMA, with a strong political role, will be an essential partner to the Afghan Government during the transformation period. Let me note that further cuts in the budget of UNAMA may have a negative impact on its ability to fulfil its core mandate. Given the magnitude of the challenges facing Afghanistan and the wider region, a properly staffed and resourced UNAMA remains key to ensuring the success of the transition period.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I now give the floor to the representative of Kyrgyzstan.

Mr. Kydyrov (Kyrgyzstan) (*spoke in Russian*): At the outset, I should like to express our gratitude to the Russian presidency of the Security Council for having convened today's debate. We also thank the Secretary-General, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, for his briefing on the situation on Afghanistan, and his Special Representative, Ján Kubiš, for his effective management of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA). We take this opportunity to express our full support for the activities of UNAMA and to welcome the adoption of resolution 2096 (2013), which extends its mandate.

Today, Afghanistan is at a critical juncture in its historical development. We are witnessing the withdrawal of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) and the transfer of responsibilities to the Afghan National Security Forces. We are also witnessing the implementation of the reconciliation process and of international agreements on the economic development of Afghanistan.

However, the situation in a number of provinces remains unstable. Clearly, NATO must, with the withdrawal of the military contingent, bring to a logical conclusion its mission to establish the conditions necessary for stability, development and security.

The transfer of security responsibilities must be implemented gradually and systematically, while maintaining an atmosphere of calm and trust. The withdrawal of the ISAF force cannot be allowed to open the way to destructive forces or to enable extremist or terrorist groups to penetrate neighbouring countries; that is of particular concern to us.

Afghanistan's peaceful development will not be possible if the problem of opium production in the country is not eradicated. The spread of that deadly poison also affects the countries of Central Asia, which are on the transit route towards the north to countries of Europe and Asia. We believe that this calls for robust action in the fight against illicit trafficking in drugs in Afghanistan.

Efforts to achieve national reconciliation are among the core conditions for ensuring lasting peace in Afghanistan. Kyrgyzstan welcomes the activities of the High Peace Council, chaired by Salahuddin Rabbani, and believes that the process of reconciliation must be implemented by Afghans themselves in the interests of all Afghans. The comprehensive peace process must be open to all stakeholders in Afghanistan who are prepared to reject violence, break all ties with international terrorism and respect the Constitution of the nation.

An equally important component of political reform in Afghanistan will be the April 2014 presidential and legislative elections. The timely finalization of the electoral law, the resolution of problems related to voter registration and the establishment of safe conditions for the holding the elections are critical. Kyrgyzstan welcomes the resolve of the Afghan authorities to hold free, fair and transparent elections, in accordance with national legislation, which can serve as the basis for the continued stable development of Afghanistan.

Afghanistan's involvement in regional cooperation and the broadening of trade and economic ties with neighbouring States is a key condition for the peaceful

development of the country. Kyrgyzstan, as a member of a number of regional organizations and the current chair of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and the Collective Security Treaty Organization, is prepared to contribute to that process. We believe that it is important to actively utilize the capacities of regional organizations in addressing Afghanistan's problems.

I would like to inform the Council that Kyrgyzstan is planning to hold a round table on Afghanistan in Bishkek in the near future. In August, we will also hold a scientific and practical conference on the topic "Afghanistan 2014: prospects for development in the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan and challenges and threats to the security of Central Asia in the context of the withdrawal of the core contingents of the International Security Assistance Force". We invite interested parties to take part in those events.

We support the Istanbul Process and participate in all the working groups on confidence-building measures. We are prepared to actively advance issues relating to the implementation of regional projects on Afghanistan in the areas of energy, transportation and agriculture. Kyrgyzstan will play an active role in the upcoming meeting of the Foreign Ministers of the parties to the Istanbul Process, which is to be held on 26 April in Almaty.

At the same time, stable development in Afghanistan requires continued long-term international financial support for the Government within the framework of the pledges made at the Tokyo Conference last year.

In conclusion, let me reaffirm the constant support of Kyrgyzstan for the sovereignty, territorial integrity and unity of Afghanistan, as well as our genuine interest in establishing peace and stability in that brotherly country.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I now give the floor to the representative of Georgia.

Mr. Makharoblishvili (Georgia): Georgia expresses its full support for the activities of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) and shares the view that the Mission will play a fundamental role in allowing Afghanistan and the international community to work effectively together to fulfil the Tokyo commitments and in monitoring the human rights and humanitarian situation on the ground.

We believe that it is essential that UNAMA be equipped with an appropriate mandate and be provided with ample resources needed to fulfill its role, particularly throughout the transition year of 2014. We therefore welcome the report of the Secretary-General (S/2013/133) and the Council's unanimous adoption today of resolution 2096 (2013). Let me say that the greater the stability and security on the ground, the more effective the activities of UNAMA will be. A stable and secure environment is a necessary condition for the Mission to appropriately fulfil its mandate.

Moreover, we believe that, without a stable and secure Afghanistan, it is difficult to imagine achieving sustainable stability and security at the regional level and beyond. I think we, the international community, bear our share of responsibility to assist the people of Afghanistan on the difficult path towards peace and development. For that particular reason, Georgia has, for its part, committed itself to stand by its friends from the neighbouring region. We are firmly convinced that supporting Afghanistan, especially during this challenging phase of its history, will benefit the long-term security of Georgia and of the broader region.

Georgia has proved that it is willing and able to contribute to international security. For several years, the Georgian military contingent has performed its mission in Afghanistan. At the moment, in the framework of the International Security Assistance Force, 1,600 Georgian military personnel are performing their duty, including in the most volatile province, Helmand.

Georgia has decided to continue its contribution beyond 2014. Moreover, fully recognizing the importance of continued support to the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan throughout the "Transformation Decade" and the role of the Afghan National Security Forces in preserving and consolidating the gains on the ground, the Government of Georgia has committed to making financial contributions to the Afghan National Security Forces sustainability fund.

We fully support the firm position of the international community and of the Security Council that assistance to Afghanistan should be as comprehensive as possible and should not be limited to the military component alone. Aid in the humanitarian field is crucial for long-term security and further development. We are convinced that Georgia's commitment to providing assistance in the field of health care complements our military contribution.

Undoubtedly, lasting peace and security in Afghanistan can be achieved primarily through an

all-inclusive reconciliation process, generated by the people of Afghanistan. Nonetheless, we reaffirm our readiness to provide support to a peaceful post-2014 transition in the country.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I now give the floor to the representative of Kazakhstan.

Mrs. Aitimova (Kazakhstan) (*spoke in Russian*): At the outset, let me congratulate the Russian Federation on its assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for the month of March. We also thank the Secretary-General for his informative report (S/2012/133) and recognize the great importance of the work of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Afghanistan, Mr. Ján Kubiš.

Kazakhstan supports the rapid development of Afghanistan as a peaceful, independent and stable developing State with a cohesive society. At the regional and national levels, Kazakhstan is contributing to the stable and lasting development of Afghanistan and to efforts to reduce the security threats emanating from that country, including terrorism, drug-trafficking and religious extremism. As such, on 26 April in Almaty, we will hold a ministerial meeting on Afghanistan as part of the Istanbul Process. We are confident that that meeting will contribute to actively involving Afghanistan in regional integration processes, to strengthening mutual trade, economic and humanitarian cooperation, and to accelerating the implementation of infrastructure projects linking Afghanistan and the region. All of that will ensure that there is genuine substance to the ongoing international efforts under the auspices of the United Nations, and thereby contribute to restoring peace and stability in the country. In that regard, we call on all participants in the upcoming meeting in Almaty to adopt a responsible and results-driven approach to the issues that will be discussed there.

We believe that the United Nations is playing a key role in ensuring the coordination of the international community's efforts aimed at achieving a political settlement and recovery in Afghanistan, in close cooperation with the Afghan Government and with the support of the world community, above all the countries of the region. In that context, Kazakhstan has submitted proposals for the consideration of the Secretary-General with regard to establishing in Almaty a United Nations centre for multilateral diplomacy, with the aim of making more active use of the geographic, communications and infrastructure capacities of our country in the interests of the United Nations, including to provide Afghanistan with support in terms of recovery and humanitarian assistance in the post-2014 period.

We support the national reconciliation process in Afghanistan. Our position is that intra-Afghan dialogue can have a positive impact only if the Afghan Government plays the leading role and if the militia respect without conditions three basic principles, namely, putting aside their weapons, recognizing the Constitution and completely severing ties with Al-Qaida and other extremist organizations.

Kazakhstan expects the Afghan Government and the International Security Assistance Force to continue their ongoing efforts to address drug production and trafficking. The Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), the Central Asian Regional Information and Coordination Centre for combating the illicit trafficking of narcotic drugs, psychotropic substances and their precursors (CARICC) and the anti-drug operation Channel, conducted under the aegis of the Collective Security Treaty Organization, must play an important role in that regard. We welcome Afghanistan obtaining observer-State status at the SCO and CARICC.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I now give the floor to the representative of Ukraine.

Mr. Sergeyev (Ukraine): I thank you, Mr. President, for holding this important debate.

While Ukraine aligns itself with the statement of the European Union, I find it pertinent to make a few brief points in my national capacity.

Security in Afghanistan and the Central Asian region is one of the important issues that attract the attention of the international community. Ukraine believes that without providing adequate security conditions in Afghanistan, it is difficult to talk of reviving the Afghan economy, better living standards and implementing social programmes and other projects to rebuild the country.

The presence of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan for more than 10 years has made an important contribution to the process of stabilizing the political and security situation in the country. Currently, Ukrainian peacekeeping personnel in the country comprise 28 representatives. Since 2009, Ukraine has permitted the transit of cargo for ISAF needs in Afghanistan over its territory.

Ukraine supports the gradual transfer of responsibility for maintaining security from the international forces to the Afghan National Army and Police.

The withdrawal of ISAF from Afghanistan requires the development and implementation of a possible response by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) to new challenges and threats that have a direct impact on OSCE States that border Afghanistan, as well as on the whole OSCE area.

In order to make a detailed analysis of potential risks to the security of OSCE participating States, the Ukrainian chairmanship of the Organization sees merit in conducting in-depth discussions on that important issue within the OSCE framework. With regard to such activities, the Ukrainian chairmanship proposes to devote a specific session of the 2013 Annual Security Review Conference to border-related issues. Such work may lay the basis for developing an update to the OSCE Border Security and Management Concept, which defines the framework for cooperation among OSCE participating States.

Ukraine supports the decisions of the international conferences on Afghanistan of 2010 to 2012 aimed at strengthening peace and security in the country, promoting its social and economic recovery, supporting integration processes and developing regional cooperation. We fully share the common view that the regional approach plays a key role in ensuring durable stability in Afghanistan and in the wider region. Afghanistan's neighbours play a very important role, and their commitment to our joint efforts is indispensable.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): There are no more names inscribed on the list of speakers. The Security Council has thus concluded the present stage of its consideration of the item on its agenda.

The meeting rose at 4.15 p.m.